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ABSTRACT

This paper explored how art history is taught in secondary schools. The author maintained that identifying the origins and evolution of ideas ensures that proposed models of teaching art history adhere to the philosophical base from which they derive. The paper is divided into five sections. In the first part, the author described four categories of historical inquiry: realistic, formal, expressive, and pragmatic, but argued that these are not mutually exclusive. He maintained that student populations, available resources, and educational goals are other factors that must be considered when deciding which model of art-history instruction to use. Section two, Models of Art History Instruction, reported on three approaches to art history instruction: works of art, information, and process. In section three, Art History as an Inquiry Process, differences between teaching art history as information processing or as a process of finding and answering questions are discussed. The Process Model: An Example Derived from Archaeology is the theme of section four. The author chose Native- American rock art to illustrate how such a lesson could be taught. He illustrated ways in which certain art historical practices might proceed in art education classrooms. Five categories are described: reconstruction, description, attribution, interpretation, and explanation. In the summary, the author explained how an instructor using the inquiry process must design questions which will encourage students to invent their own further inquiries. Resource files are necessary in the classroom for this process. (KM)

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ARCHAEOLOGY AS THE BASIS OF AN INQUIRY PROCESS PARADIGM FOR SECONDARY LEVEL ART INSTRUCTION

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ARCHAEOLOGY AS THE BASIS OF AN INQUIRY PROCESS PARADIGM FOR SECONDARY LEVEL ART HISTORY INSTRUCTION

OVERVIEW

Proposals for models of instruction are abundant in the literature of both education and art education: Bruner, Skinner, Ausubel, Gagne, Bloom, Piaget, Lowenfeld, Eisner, Chapman, McFee, Gardner -- too many to list here. Such proposals often outline ideas about the form which teaching or education might take. At one time or another, art education has derived some impetus from many models. At this time, however, a substantial number of theorists and practitioners in the field of art education refer to curriculum and instructional structures derived from professional disciplines in the arts (Greer 1987). This paper addresses itself to one of those disciplines -- art history.

BACKGROUND

The knowledge base of literature and research generated by generations of art historians is densely elaborated and intricately interwoven. It is not easy going for the novice. Even the literature generated by more familiar art historians represents many styles and forms: Zucker, Wolfflin, Panofsky, Janson, Arnason, Feldman, Hauser, Clark, Hughes, Canaday, Read, Brommer, Gardner -- there are many others. Each writer has a

particular perspective, goal, area, mode of working, emphasis, or specialty. Art educators who attempt to make use of the available literature in the discipline often find it difficult to translate art-historical practice into classroom instruction.

How does one choose? As an intermediate step, it is useful to clarify not only one's considerations of art history, but the parent discipline of history as well. Mapping the lineage and evolution of ideas ensures that proposed models of teaching art history follow in an orderly manner the philosophical base from which they are derived. The literature in art education provides some guidance toward such a end.

HISTORICAL INQUIRY

Erickson (1984) proposes four categories of historical inquiry: realistic, formal, expressive, and pragmatic.

Realistic

Realistic historians characteristically describe history as occurring outside of any attempt to reconstruct it. History simply "is." A realistic historian has the overarching goal of doing justice to what actually happened in an historical context. Events in a particular historical context are seen as unique; no

other combination of circumstances have ever been aligned just as the ones under investigation. Making sense of what was without contamination from other concerns is the goal of the realist.

Formal

Formal historians, like scientists, look to explain historical events by referring to laws or generalizations about the nature of human activity. One of the major tasks for the formal historian is the definition of categories. For example, what might formerly have been viewed as insignificant events may be linked together through analyses which attempt to describe commonalities and linkages. Research of this type not only strives to make sense of what has already occurred, it may also attempt to predict trends or to describe particular tendencies based on analysis of past events.

Expressive

Expressive historians are most concerned with the definition of an individual statement about the events of the past. The polar position in this style focuses on truly unique and subjective personal historical statements. For example, an expressive historian would not assume it possible to uncover the

whole truth. It is impossible to describe a completely accurate version of an historical event simply because parts do not constitute an accurate reconstruction of the events under investigation. A whole is most certainly more than the sum of the parts.

Pragmatic

Pragmatic historians emphasize a dialogue between the past and the present. In this way the present and the past illuminate each other. Historical issues of importance are those relevant to the time in which the historian works. Problems of the present define the relevant concerns for those who seek to describe insight through a systematic review of the past. The engine driving pragmatic historical research is different from the other styles described here. More than simply trying to "set the records straight," a practitioner of the pragmatic school of historical inquiry has an agenda for readers which may include a call for action such as to lend support to initiating, reforming, supporting, or altering the status quo in the subject area.

Summary

These four styles of historical inquiry are not mutually

exclusive; historians can work within more than one style. Erickson (1986) does not suggest that one style is "better" than others in every situation. It would appear that each style can be utilized and appreciated because of the insights and understandings it brings. It is certain that practitioners of each style: make discrete philosophical assumptions; practice methods which may be unique to them; and may have specific criteria for judgment which may or may not be shared by other historians.

Debates about means and goals for historical inquiry, art historical practice, and model of art history instruction must be considered in terms of student populations, available resources, educational goals, as well as many other program and teacher-specific factors. Many models of art history instruction are currently in use in classrooms at all levels of education. Identification and critical analysis of current or project models of art history instruction is a necessary step in making the appropriate choice for each educational context.

MODELS OF ART HISTORY INSTRUCTION

If the process of historical inquiry can be categorized, what can be suggested about extant models of art history instruction?

Erickson (1986) reviewed models for art teaching derived from

surveys of art education practitioners (at the K-12 level) done over the last decade. Her work indicates: (a) no unified, agreed-upon model for the teaching of art history; and (b) art history as it is presently taught by many art educators is not the practice of the discipline recognized by most professional art historians.

Such findings bring about some obvious and disturbing questions: What is taught as art history in schools? How do current approaches to teaching art history align themselves with the discipline of art history?

There have been some empirical efforts made to address such questions. Erickson's studies define three approaches to the teaching of art history: works of art; information; and process.

Works of art

Art history often emphasizes the all too familiar biographical information about artists, cursory details about techniques, dates, and place names. This description of art history teaching seems more like art appreciation. It also seems to do little to make sense of the chronology and interrelatedness of ideas that are essential to art history. It appears relatively useless as a model for flexible, progressive art history instruction.

Information

This model is widely used today. Art historians and art educators working in this way have developed many textual and visual resources for teaching art history at the K-12 level. Art instructors utilizing such materials will find educational goals and instructional strategies clearly specified. The way in which instruction proceeds is closely identified with models of curriculum and instruction derived from empirical research in education, psychology, and related fields.

Process

This model of teaching involves more than the simple specification of data and facts about who, what, and where. Moreover, it can be considered as a more specifically oriented derivative of the "information" model. In general, this model involves students (and instructors) in the use and development of cognitive skills at a higher level than either of the other two approaches. Skills such as categorizing, interpreting, making distinctions are emphasized. This approach is the most recent in terms of both development and implementation. Models of this type are based on assumptions grounded in contemporary cognitive theory.

Summary

It appears that a combination of information and process approaches would constitute a practical and empirically-based model for art history instruction. Such a model emphasizes cognitive processes as a continuum and it has the potential to enhance the use and development students' inquiry skills. Many educational theorists, from Ausubel to Gardner, support similar models of instruction.

ART HISTORY AS AN INQUIRY PROCESS

Erickson (1983) and Erickson & Katter (1981) have investigated the effects of a model of art history instruction constituted as an inquiry process. They propose a multi-part model involving: description, cataloging, connoisseurship, attribution, interpretation, and other sequenced processes which can be focused on art historical inquiry. These researchers define a model art history instruction which builds on childrens' natural tendencies to investigate things with which they are presented.

In making their proposals, both Erickson and Katter draw on inquiry conducted into the practice of art history in classrooms as well as work in the definition and categorization of how

historians pursue their work in that discipline. Their work reveals that: (a) there are currently many methods employed in the name of teaching art history; and (b) there are relatively few empirically-based models upon which to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of particular models of art history instruction.

There is a distinct difference between art history treated as the collection of information and art history as a process of finding and answering questions. We can either accept the notions presented in art history literature or we can develop our own original sense of what art works (or artifacts) are or what they may mean. It is this development of original art historical ideas (Erickson 1983) which is the driving force behind the kind of art history instruction described here. By this I mean that the focus is not be so much on what an art historian might conclude, but on how art-historical inquiry is pursued.

THE PROCESS MODEL: AN EXAMPLE DERIVED FROM ARCHAEOLOGY

The processes through which art historians work are many and varied. Erickson (1983) places art historical activities into three categories: processes for establishing facts; processes for interpreting meaning; and processes for explaining change. The evolution of students' ideas through the application of these

processes makes up the inquiry process method of art history instruction.

Rationale

In order to clarify these distinctions, this paper now focuses on art works which have received virtually no art historical attention. They are, however, representative of a much larger group of similar art works which have world wide-connection -- some date from the dawn of man's symbol-making existence. I have chosen Native American rock art specifically the petroglyphs (peckings and incisings) and pictographs (drawings and paintings) of the Lower Pecos River region of southwest Texas.

This art form has been chosen for several reasons:

1. Native American rock art in one form or another is present in most areas of what is now the United States -- making it accessible to almost all those involved in public school art programs.

2. Rock art is not difficult to locate in archaeological literature, through natural museums or state or National Park

services -- making it a resource which is, for the most part, either in the public domain or accessible to nonprofit groups.

3. There is much available information on the cultures and artifacts in the literature of different disciplines-- archaeology, anthropology, art history.

4. Rock art has remarkably consistent and visual elements which lend themselves to description and analysis -- iconology, style, size, technique, use of color.

What follows is not meant to be a comprehensive listing; it does illustrate ways in which certain art historical practices might proceed in art education classrooms. The five categories listed here serve to describe a process model of art history instruction which emphasizes an archaeological perspective. Generally, this description is presented in a step-wise approach which builds from the relatively simple to relatively complex activities. The first two areas to be discussed -- reconstruction and description -- can be considered as conjoined. Both types of tasks must be accomplished in order to proceed to the next level of inquiry.

Reconstruction

Art works and cultural objects from the past seldom survive through their history in exactly the same form and condition as when they were first completed -- they change over time. The process of reconstruction helps makes sense of an object under scrutiny. Discovering the original and unaltered appearance of an art work is critical to understanding it in the time in which it is studied. But, depending on the fortunes of a particular work, the need for reconstruction may be minimal or perhaps even completely unnecessary, or absolutely impossible.

For example: If we study the most ancient pictographic rock art of Texas as it was some 4,000 years ago, we must imagine it not worn by the centuries, or overpainted by the works of subsequent cultures, or damaged by any one of a number of natural or human activities, but brightly covering a fresh surface of smooth stone. These images of unknown purpose must be considered on their own terms. This narrowing of focus is necessary in order to be clear about what it is that serves as the focus of the inquiry.

Most often real reconstruction must remain a product of the imagination -- although computer technology has proven to be an invaluable tool in visualizing what has been in the past. As far as the rock art of the Lower Pecos is concerned, a first step

might be to select a rock art panel which has been obscured so that the entirety of the image is unavailable to the viewer--one that literally needs reconstruction of the images present.

The process can begin by asking students whether a work appears complete. Asking pertinent questions begins the inquiry. For example: If the images are somehow incomplete, what seems to be lacking? If time or some force has changed its appearance, in what way(s) has this occurred? What relationship are evident in other, similar panels, that have not been lost to the viewer? What does the literature suggest of changes brought about by various agents -- fading, exfoliation, obfuscation by mineral deposition, overpainting, vandalism? Lists of questions germane to the problem can be easily be developed.

Providing adequate, competent responses to such queries will entail background reading and the accumulation of relevant visual materials on the part of the instructor. The necessary visual and textual materials are not, at this time, widely available through traditional art education channels. But, as noted, the necessary resources are available to the patient and persistent.

Description

To draw accurate conclusions about an art work, a clearly rendered examination be conducted. A description is a carefully

phrased report of such observations. A listing, for example, of the subject matter, size, materials, and formal elements comprise the components of a factual description which can be verified by others. A basis in fact must be established in order to build further study of any art work. Reconstruction may have to be a part of or precede this step.

A comprehensive general description of rock art could be written like this: Rock art is two-dimensional. It is either: (a) drawn with a tool, or produced by the application of paint by other processes,ie., pictographs; or (b) produced by the incising or removing of rock surface to form an image or images, ie., petroglyphs.

Additionally, for the most part all rock art can be categorized as either: (a) abstract; or (b) representational. Abstract elements or styles are those which appear to have little or no relationship to the visual elements of the everyday world. Representational images are almost always concerned with the depiction of real-life forms of either animal, vegetable, or human types. (Schaafsma 1980).

As far a classroom activities, photographs or slides of any rock art -- any style -- which draws and holds interest may be selected. Then questions can be formed: How was the original work accomplished? How is the piece different from any other rock art the students have seen? What are the apparent subjects? What

formal elements seem to dominate the composition? When working in a descriptive mode it is important not to allow students to become interpretive. The descriptive process will proceed more smoothly when limited to what others would likely see if it were simply pointed out.

Attribution

The processes involved in attribution are establishing the specific and essential facts about a art-historical events. Such facts can focus on the artist, date, culture, function, or technique attributable to a given art work. Evidence used in making attribution is not limited to the art work itself. Information about events involving the artist, the time in which he or she lived, the conventions of the items, or any other relevant historical data may be employed to clarify the questions asked.

For example, date attribution of some Lower Pecos pictographs has been determined through investigations into the iconography of the rock art in the region as compared with artifacts found in other types of investigations. Archaeologists and paleo-anthropologists now conjecture that only after plains Indians made forays into the Lower Pecos region is the bow and arrow is found in pictographs; prior to that time the atlatl (or spear

thrower) was show in the right hand of the anthropomorphic figures. Researchers have determined the introduction date of bow and arrow technology through field work in which these artifacts have been found in verifiable stratigraphic contexts where reliable C-14 dating has been possible. In this way, for example, pictographs which depict a bow and arrow are placed in a chronological order which puts them after 900 AD; those depicting the atlatl are dated prior to this time.

Technological, social, or economic factors could also play an important role in making sense what kinds of claims can and cannot be made about specific works. In the case of the Lower Pecos rock art, a wide-ranging review of the information available in relevant literature would be necessary in order to determine what, if any, evidence has been found to support hypotheses in the areas of consideration. A pictograph or petroglyph could be selected which is not so obviously associated with a particular time period. If a date were not given, how would it be possible to establish one, given the criteria currently used by archaeologists and art historians? What sort of evidence would be necessary in order to support arguments for the attribution you might make? Is such evidence readily available?

Defining a list of relevant questions would place the students securely on a knowledge base derived from the best available literature, but one guided by their own speculations

about what they see. The instructor would again be responsible for developing and presenting the empirically based information, both prose and visual, needed to address students' inquiries. Instructors would also need to guide closely the direction of students questioning to assure that the line of inquiry remains both constructive and within the boundaries of the associated disciplines.

Interpretation

The processes involved in finding meaning in an artwork are called interpretation. Many art historians would suggest that finding objective meaning is their goal. And finding historical meaning requires coming to an understanding of an art work in the same way as that which would have been possible at the time the work was produced. In order to accomplish this, art historians often use evidence from outside the works themselves to support their interpretations.

For example, many contemporary archaeologists use an ethnographic analogy in order to assist with the clarification of potential meaning(s) of recurring symbols found in pictographs of all periods. Although there are inherent difficulties with this way of finding meaning, certain studies of this type have been extremely useful in establishing a cognitive framework for works

produced by ethnic groups which have survived into present times.

The need to move back to the time and place of an art work is understandable when it is realized that the oldest of these works dates from at least 4000 BP (before present) and represents the cultural legacy of groups which have continuously occupied sites in the Lower Pecos area for at least 9000 years. These other worlds are far distant and deeply incomprehensible to us today without the aid of the information made available through the interdisciplinary investigations. For these reasons, such information is a necessary part of the art historian's interpretive knowledge base.

The art historian working in this mode must break away from the twentieth century and the way modern images and ideas are considered in this place and time. How was art conceived and responded to in hunter/gatherer periods? What effect did older pictographs have on the production of later ones? Were the artists special people in their societies who produced these images for specific purposes? Did all members of a society understanding the meanings, or were only a few particular individuals fully informed?

For an interpretive exercise, a pictograph might be selected which has a particularly intriguing quality about it. It could convey a tone, mood, or particular point more strongly than others. Now review the literature on interpretive archaeology and

anthropology for evidence of visual information which would support conclusions about what might constitute significant events, circumstances, or values of the time when the particular pictograph was produced. Does it appears as if there are obvious symbols, themes, or imagery present? Do the formal elements convey a particular attitude or feeling toward the apparent subject matter?

It might be useful to construct a single-sentence interpretive statement of meaning. What is the significance, the point, of the pictograph? What is the available evidence for any of the conclusions proposed? What other information would be necessary in order to support the interpretive conclusions? In any case, with the rock art of the Lower Pecos it will be necessary to describe the polar positions which rock art researchers themselves have taken relative to the issue of interpretation.

Rock walls covered with hundreds of novel images led many early investigators to infer that rock art represented the rituals of hunting cults simply because they saw images of what they took to be (apparently) men with weapons chasing animals, or groups of animals apparently pierced with spears and arrows. Later on, the abstract images -- forms apparently not related to known referents -- were seen as the result of cultural experimentation with psychotropic substances; documented cases of

historical cultures participating in such ritual activities fueled this ethnographic comparison. Contemporary investigators voice a wide range of theories: From the site-specific explanations and categorical definitions of nontraditional investigator LaVan Martineau, through the informed multi-disciplinary speculations of Solveg Turpin, to the rational denial of the possibility of accurate interpretation about a long-extinct culture posed by Joseph Labadie, those seeking to define meaning for the rock art of the Lower Pecos will confront a literature which records more than it explains.

Explanation

Basically, two different types of explanations have arisen to account for cultural changes over time: narrative and scientific (Erickson 1983). Changes occurring through time are often recorded in the art work of a culture.

Narrative explanations: Sometimes such changes can be explained by making connections with a series of identifiable circumstances, traditions, influences, or innovations. These types of explanations are termed narrative.

Scientific explanations: Changes which are considered through understanding of occurrences which suggest principles or laws are called scientific explanations. Artistic shifts from one definable extreme in style to another (minimalist to highly decorative) might be placed in the scientific category.

An instructor could lead students to consider a number of pictographs or petroglyphs and ask certain questions related to these two types of proposed explanations: Can style groups be identified? Are there any noticeable transitions, progressions, or revivals in what is seen? How might changes that are detectable have been influenced by particular events, technological developments, changes in regional climates or attitudes toward life? Is there a satisfactory story or set of principles which might explain the changes noticed in these works?

SUMMARY

There is a linearity in the logic of the proposed sequence of steps. First, factual processes are engaged, then interpretive processes are brought into focus, finally, an explanatory process is begun. This sequence is not so firmly fixed that is cannot vary. It is common that these different kinds of inquiry are

intermixed in order to make the clearest sense of the works(s) under study. It is possible that each kind of evidence might be used, in turn, to support claims derived from inquiry begun in the others.

How can art history be taught as an inquiry process? An initial step requires an instructor to design questions which will prod students to invent further inquiries of their own. Teachers can, for example, develop a range of interpretive and reflective questions which relate to their students' interests in a particular subject. Specific topics for consideration could easily be derived from concerns students have dealt with in the study of artists from all eras of art history: societal change, magic, deities, joy, sorrow, and worship (Fitzpatrick 1990). Issues such as these are universal in that they are reflected in art across cultures and time periods.

Resource files have been found to be an important part of classroom investigations into art history. Such files can be made an integral part of classroom activity when students are engaged in helping to obtain, for example, items from newspapers and magazines; information from school library research; or transcripts from interviews with professionals or practitioners in areas of interest. An instructor can use these resource files as the foundation for questions which can then be focused on a chronological study of specific artists or art works. This has

been found to be an economical way of procuring the resources which are needed to support such curricula.

The artworks forming the basis of particular units of study can also be found in the community or the region, or obtained through the cooperation of individual artists, dealers, librarians, or friends and relatives of the teacher or students. This type of strategy can be adapted to study of any artist, artwork, or
period of art. The flexibility enjoyed in individualizing such a curriculum is nearly unlimited.

The means and ends of many types of art-historical inquiry can be integrated into precollege (K-12) art education programs from (at least) middle school level onward. Particular instructional models and teaching strategies used will, however, hinge on numerous factors which are outside the scope of this paper: The developmental level of the students and their educational and art backgrounds; the area(s) of expertise of each instructor; the realities of the instructional environment (funding, physical plant, local resources); and the structure of current art curricula.

With reform in art education, a greater amount of up-to-date, accurate ethnic and Native American art history will necessarily be incorporated into revised art education curricula. Well-considered attempts to describe and analyze potential

instructional paradigms and curriculum packages are deliberate and necessary steps toward the placement of archaeology and Native American studies -- by name -- into future models of art education.

John Labadie

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